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775 These beliefs of the people in the existence of spirits and in life beyond the grave explain the existence and meaning of many customs practiced by the Georgian Highlanders. Thus, for example, the Tushes believe that the soul of the deceased continues to live among his relatives,[50] that the soul needs food and drink, like every human being, and therefore during dinner and supper a portion of the food is put aside for the satisfaction of his hunger. The relatives must take good care of all the needs of the souls of their dead, because of his ability to bring good and evil to the relatives according to the veneration shown to him.

"The world beyond the grave is known by the Tushes under the name of *suleti,* meaning 'the place of souls,' from the Georgian word *suli,* meaning soul. At its entrance sit the stern judges who receive the deceased and with sharp scissors cut two or three hairs from their heads. The *suleti* consists of two parts: paradise and hell. Between them flows a stormy and fiery river of pitch. Over the river is a bridge made of one human hair. The righteous pass over the bridge in safety, but the sinners fall into the fire."

So long as the family exists, the dead can count upon it to support their needs, but if a family dies out its dead roam hungry and homeless for all eternity. This belief explains the dread which the Georgian Highlanders have of remaining without children, who will take care of their dead parents. Male children [842] are particularly desired, not only because they are regarded as defenders of family interests in blood-feuds and supporters of the tradition, but also because they represent security and comfort for their parents after death, in their life beyond the grave, which explains the existence of the custom of the husband divorcing a sterile wife and taking another—with the first wife's permission [597] if she has borne only female children. The same phenomenon accounts for the practice of the custom of the adoption of the son-in-law, known in the Georgian language as *sedsidze,* and, lacking a son-in-law, the adoption of a stranger—to have a posterity who will take care of dead parents.

769 The belief in spirits explains the custom of putting aside a portion of food at every feast or at ordinary meals for dead

[50] Khakhanov: a, 50-1.

1 [see cent 116, pp 42-43 -- Analyst]

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769 are of great importance; they give pleasure to the souls here on earth. But if such services are not arranged, the soul becomes an enemy of the house and may send mischief. In order to prevent this, many people arrange their own commemorative services while still alive. The entire village, and sometimes even the whole community, is assembled for this occasion. The person about to die puts on his best clothes and eats and drinks as much as he can. The people cry and wail, recite his deeds, kiss his clothes, etc. . . . In a word, they do everything exactly as if it were a real funeral ceremony. The living-dead observes those who appear to be most devoted to him, with the thought that after his death his soul may bring happiness to all who love him. The ceremony ends with a general feast.

[764] The Khevsurs also have this custom of living people arranging their own funerals, differing from the Svans in that the Khevsur is not present at his own funeral celebration, but listens to the wailing and crying of his neighbors in an adjoining room.

● 775 The manner of the interpretation and representation of the soul of the dead by the Georgians in general is pictured in the custom of catching the soul of a drowned person from the river, as it is practiced by the Georgians of Samursaken,[88] and with local variations in details by their neighbors, the Abkhazians.

The soul of the drowned person remains, according to popular belief among the Georgians of Samurzakan, in the river for fifteen days and roams under the water in the vicinity of the place where the tragedy occurred. The relatives of the drowned person are anxious to find someone who is a professional expert at enticing souls out of the water and catching them. For this purpose the soul-catchers take a skin bag called *guda* to the open mouth of which is affixed a silver thread, and two men drag it upstream from the banks to the middle of the river, beginning about seven hundred feet above the spot where the corpse was found. The soul-catchers have in their hands musical instruments similar to violins, and to their monotonous accompaniment they sing: "Soul, soul! Come out of the water. Soul, soul! Fly into the skin." The soul must come out of the water and enter the skin through

[88] Machavariani and Bartolomei.

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the silver thread which is lowered into the water. The ceremony lasts until the skin will no longer swell. That means the soul is caught in the skin. Then the skin's mouth is tied with the thread and brought to the relatives of the drowned man, who, after having redeemed the soul, on the same day release it through a hole made for that purpose into the grave in order that it may be re-united with the body. More than once the soul-catchers have complained to the local justice because they did not receive the payment promised them. If the accused refused to pay on the pretense that although the soul of their relative was caught but the whole of it was not delivered to them, while the soul-catchers proved that they had delivered the entire soul, in such circumstances the wise judge, in order to satisfy both sides, would solve the case according to popular custom by forcing both sides to take the oath as to the truthfulness of their words.

This custom is especially interesting to note because of its legal character. When the swollen and tied-up skin-bag, which is supposed to contain the soul of a drowned person, is delivered by the soul-catchers to the relatives of the deceased, the latter are obliged to pay the fee fixed beforehand for the work of catching the soul. If they refuse to pay, the offended party resorts to the law of custom, according to which the justice settles the dispute.

Parallel with this custom among the Georgians of Samurzakan regarding the soul of a drowned person is a similar belief among the Georgians of the Telav District, Department of Tiflis.[56] They believe that "the souls of drowned persons are taken in possession by evil spirits, and in order to free the soul it is necessary to kill a goat on the bank of the river where he was drowned and throw the bleeding animal into the water with these words: 'Here is a goat for you; free the drowned man!'"

The funeral ceremonies which accompany the burial of a dead person and the special commemorative celebrations which are arranged at certain periods thereafter consist of customary procedures which are followed and executed by the people with minute exactness and have the same aim: to feed and comfort the dead.

[56] Stepanov: 82.

[2 see cat. 116, p 48 -- Analyst]